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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001885

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: FATAH CONFERENCE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE
PROCEEDINGS: NO AGREEMENT ON TIMING, VENUE, REPRESENTATION

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. October 10-15 Preparatory Committee meetings in Amman for Fatah's planned Sixth Party Conference included extensive discussion on Conference timing, venue, representation, and other modalities. The meetings ended abruptly on October 15 due to the Fatah Central Committee's (FCC) failure to convene. Preparatory Committee members decided that they could not continue preparations until the FCC approves their recommendations. End summary.

Conference Venue, Timing, Representation

¶2. (C) Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Muhammad al-Madani told PolFSN October 15 that the Sixth Conference Preparatory Committee discussed every aspect of preparation but agreed that the FCC must decide all the controversial issues. Fatah PLC bloc leader and FRC member Azzam al-Ahmad told PolFSN that the FCC will review Preparatory Committee recommendations when it next convenes.

¶3. (C) Preparatory Committee members agreed to limit the total number of Conference delegates to no more than 1,200. (Note: This figure, acceptable to President Abbas and most FCC members, is rejected by jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghuthi and other grassroots activists, who want a more representative Conference with as many as 5,000 delegates. End note). They also recommended that membership numbers for Fatah's leadership structures remain unchanged, with 21 FCC members and 120 FRC members. Of the 21 FCC members, the Committee recommended that 18 be elected by the Sixth Conference, and 3 be appointed by the newly-elected FCC. The Preparatory Committee recommended that 70 FRC members be elected at the Conference and 25-30 be appointed to the FRC from specific Fatah constituent groups. The Committee said the Conference should include at least 100 women and 100 prisoners, with 9 seats in the new FRC reserved for prisoners. The Committee agreed to introduce an FRC women's quota of at least 15 percent.

¶4. (C) The Preparatory Committee endorsed previously agreed criteria for Sixth Conference membership, to include all FCC and FRC members, qualified constituent cadres, PA governors, PLO ambassadors, and elected Fatah local representatives, and at least 30 percent of the total Conference membership consisting of those who have served in the PA security forces for more than 15 years. The committee discussed the need to expedite regional delegate elections in Nablus and Ramallah. The Committee discussed the probQm of Gaza representation while Hamas remains in control there, but did not develop a solution.

¶5. (C) On conference venue, Preparatory Committee members told PolFSN that there was no consensus on whether to hold the Conference in the West Bank or abroad, and, after lengthy discussions, Preparatory Committee Chair Muhammad Ghnaym

("Abu Mahir") said the FCC will decide when it convenes. On timing, a minority of Committee members argued that the Conference should not be held until after the crisis with Hamas is ended and new PA elections are held. However, a strong majority favored holding the Conference before general elections, with most members expressing readiness to hold the Conference in November if the venue is resolved. (Note: While a slim majority of the Committee members prefers to hold the Conference in the West Bank, with preferred venues Jericho, Ramallah, or Bethlehem, this issue has proven explosive among Fatah's top-tier leadership, some of whom (such as senior FCC members Faruq Qaddumi and Ghnaym) reject the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles and refuse to enter the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The issue has become a flashpoint in the poor relations between President Abbas and Qaddumi and assumed strong symbolic importance. End note).

Political Platform: Little Controversy
Over Points, But No FCC Agreement

¶6. (C) Muhammad al-Madani, Azzam al-Ahmad, and other Committee members told PolFSN that the political platform, draft bylaws, and Fatah's social and national programs document are complete except for final comment by some Fatah grassroots groups, some of which are demanding reference to armed struggle. These contacts said Fatah's platform drafting committees has concluded most of its work without introducing any major changes, but is still considering input from grassroots groups until final approval of these documents by the FCC.

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